

Testimony in Support of SB 461

Bill: Senate Bill No. 461
Sponsor: J. Brueggeman
Testimony on Behalf of: City of Hamilton
Testimony by: Ross Miller, Lobbyist for the City of Hamilton,
Montana
Date: February 18, 2009

The City of Hamilton supports SB 461. SB 461 is an important step in addressing the problems municipal water suppliers face, where their water rights are "trimmed back" to only that portion of the right which has historically been put to use whenever a municipal water right goes through the change process. This "trimming back" by DNRC began in 2005 when DNRC implemented new rules whereby a Change in Appropriation of a municipal water right

**"cannot exceed or increase the flow rate
historically diverted under historic use, nor
exceed the historic volume consumptively used
under the existing use."**

ARM 36.12.1902(2) (emphasis added).

Such changes to municipal water rights are commonly needed, and are typically for the purposes of changing the Place of Use (boundary of municipal water service area), which is the subject of SB 461.

This "trim back" of Pre-73 rights nullifies any protections of municipal water rights required of the Water Court under MCA 85-2-227(4), essentially nullifying the statute itself, and can result in a loss of any portion of Pre-1973 existing water rights that were put into use after 1973.

For the reason stated above the City of Hamilton supports SB 461.